

INFORMATION PAPER**UNIT CLAIMS OFFICERS – INVESTIGATION REQUIREMENTS**

1. **PURPOSE:** To inform commanders and heads of Army and DOD organizations or activities of the requirement to appoint unit claims officers and direct prompt investigation of incidents involving potential liability on the part of the U.S. Government.

2. **REFERENCES:**

- a. DODD 5515.9 – 19 April 2004
- b. AR 27-20
- c. DA Pamphlet 27-162

3. **FACTS:**

a. Commanders and heads of Army and DOD organizations or activities normally have immediate responsibility for the investigation of incidents involving their soldiers, employees, or equipment that may give rise to claims for or against the United States. To accomplish timely investigations, AR 27-20, paragraph 2-2d, provides that commanders and heads of Army and DOD organizations having responsibility for an investigation will appoint a Unit Claims Officer (UCO). Organizations that generate a significant claims load should appoint a UCO on standing orders. Immediately upon identification of a potential claim, commanders should contact the Fort Belvoir claims office in the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, 9990 Belvoir Drive, Building 257, telephone no. (703) 805-4031/4377 for help with the appointment of a UCO.

b. The purpose of the investigation is to determine the facts of an incident. It develops definitive answers to such questions as "when," "where," "who," "what," and "how." The investigation performed by a UCO provides the basis for every subsequent step in the administrative settlement of a claim or the defense of a law suit. Upon notification of an incident that may result in a claim, the UCO should contact the claims office for advice and assistance.

c. Upon completion of the investigation, the Unit Claims Officer's report is submitted to the appointing authority who in turn forwards the report to the appropriate claims approval or settlement authority (the Claims Attorney/Judge Advocate Officer at the servicing Law Center).

d. As personnel PCS, ETS, and retire, it is especially critical that UCOs timely investigate and determine the facts of potential claims prior to the departure of personnel and witnesses. Some factual issues may become impossible to determine after personnel are no longer available. Unit commanders and heads of Army and DOD organizations should direct investigation of potential claims resulting from the activities of their units.

4. **CURRENT STATUS:** The Fort Belvoir Claims Office is prepared to help with the appointment of a UCO for your organization, and to work closely with the UCO to investigate potential claims.

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